


# REPORT

DATE: August 5, 2004  
TO: Regional Council  
FROM: Don Rhodes, Manager, Government and Public Affairs  
(213) 236-1840, rhodes@scag.ca.gov  
SUBJECT: Revised Communications Strategy

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL:



RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Approve the revised Communications Strategy for FY 2004-2005.


BACKGROUND:

SCAG's Communications Strategy was adopted by the Regional Council on November 7, 2002. This revised Communications Strategy, approved by the Communications and Membership Task Force on June 1, 2004, ensures that key messages, target audiences and major SCAG initiatives reflect organizational objectives. The revisions focus on a more integrated communications program. Environmental justice groups, Native American Tribal Councils, county transportation commissions, subregions and trade associations have specifically been added to the list of target audiences. Core messages to be incorporated into the overall communications program have been identified and new communications tools highlighted.

A driving force behind the revised Communications Strategy is SCAG's Compass growth vision initiative that integrates land-use strategies with transportation investments. Compass calls for a change in 2% of our region's land mass to accommodate projected growth while maintaining our desired quality of life as well as encourages us to "plan without boundaries" and consider the regional implications of local decisions.

New communications tools include enhanced e-mail communications, a new comprehensive Regional Council Handbook, updated policy fact sheets, a member benefits brochure, a guide to SCAG media reference book, an information services brochure and development of new presentations and brochures for outreach opportunities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding is available in SCAG's 2004-2005 Overall Work Program, 05-090 Public Information and Involvement. 

## SCAG 2004-05 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

As adopted by the Regional Council on November 7, 2002  
(REVISED MAY, 2004)

### I. COMMUNICATIONS GOALS

- **Establish and effectively communicate the importance of regional governance** and of employing regional solutions to Southern California's many policy challenges.
- **Improve communications with member local governments** and other key stakeholder audiences.
- **Enhance SCAG's profile with the news media and others who influence and shape policies that affect the Southern California region through proper branding or positioning and effective public relations, government affairs, community outreach, and member relations programs and activities.** This requires identifying major critical issues and benefits and related talking points for each to create a common message and consistent points.
- **Implement an integrated communications program highlighting programmatic elements and policy solutions associated with Destination 2030, the ongoing Compass program and other major SCAG initiatives in a manner which will resonate with diverse elected, business, community and other stakeholder audiences.** This integrated approach will utilize (1) effective media relations; (2) outreach to local governments, community organizations, environmental justice groups, business organizations, labor organizations, faith based organizations, environmental groups, academic groups, civic groups, Native American Tribal Councils, and minority organizations; (3) brochures, presentations, web site enhancements and other materials; and (4) other communications activities.
- **Reinforce SCAG's brand and image as the forum for regional consensus-building and problem solving through the development and promotion of innovative products, services and initiatives.**

### II. TARGET AUDIENCES

- **Members/partners:** Regional Council members, policy committee members, state and regional agencies (CalTrans, BT&H, etc.), boards of supervisors, city councils, county transportation commissions, subregions, Native American Tribal Councils, and other elected officials and staff from member jurisdictions and planning partners.

- **Stakeholder Organizations:** Business, environmental, academic, labor, ethnic, faith-based, community, neighborhood councils, environmental justice and other stakeholder organizations throughout Southern California.
- **Legislators:** State legislators, members of Congress and key federal and state legislative staff.
- **Trade Associations/Affiliate Organizations:** League of California Cities (state org. and local subdivisions), CSAC, AMPO, NARC, CALCOG and other affiliate organizations.
- **Media:** News media outlets throughout the six-county region, including Sacramento and Washington, D.C. bureaus and national media outlets.
- **Public:** Southern California region.

### III. **\*\* Key Messages**

The overall communications program will seek to communicate variations of a series of core messages regarding SCAG, its overall mission, and the objectives of its specific initiatives. Those core messages include:

- A. SCAG is the only forum where local decision-makers come together to resolve regional challenges and formulate common solutions to the various planning and policy issues facing the six-county, 187-city Southern California region.
- B. As pointed out by SCAG's **State of the Region Report**, Southern California faces a number of transportation, air quality, housing, growth, resources management, and other regional challenges that transcend city and county lines.
- C. SCAG brings together city and county elected officials, county transportation commissions, subregional organizations, and other critical audiences to consider diverse perspectives and work toward common solutions.
- D. SCAG's **Southern California Compass** lays out a new vision for how Southern California can grow more effectively and efficiently while maintaining our desired quality of life. If we work together to change the way we plan for just two percent of our region's land mass, we can make tremendous strides in planning for a better tomorrow.
- E. **Destination 2030**, SCAG's 2004 Regional Transportation Plan, and the Compass initiative have demonstrated that the level of growth that will occur in our region over the coming decades requires that our local decision-makers start working together to resolve our regional challenges. Collectively, Southern California must do more to "plan without boundaries" and consider the regional implications of local decisions.

#### IV. IMPLEMENTING THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

##### A. *Regional Council, Policy Committee and Subregional Communications*

SCAG's elected leadership must have a comprehensive understanding and endorse the agency's efforts to foster regional collaboration. In that regard, the most important audience with whom SCAG must communicate is the Regional Council. SCAG also must communicate with committee and task force members, subregional coordinators and Native American Tribal Councils.

By providing members with comprehensive information and training about SCAG's regional issues, priorities and goals, they will be better equipped to communicate the value of SCAG and its programs and planning efforts to their elected colleagues, constituents, state and federal officials and agencies, and other stakeholder audiences.

SCAG must analyze the many ways that Regional Council and committee members are communicated with, propose improvements to those methods, and develop new methods to keep members informed.

The primary goal of the communications strategy is to enhance communications with the Regional Council. The strategy will evolve as new approaches and techniques are identified and refined. Communications techniques will include:

- Individual board member briefings
- One-on-one and group meetings to hear concerns and suggestions to improve relations, outreach and operations.
- Regional Council, committee agenda mailings
- Letters, Memos and other member correspondence
- \*\*"e-Vision" electronic newsletter
- \*\*Regional Council Manual
- "GovAffairs" E-Newsletter
- Executive Director's Report
- Policy issue briefings
- Regional Council member media/*presentation* training
- Regional Policy Fact Sheets *and brochures*
- SCAG events and meetings
- Legislative outreach
- Materials preparation and update
- New Member orientation process
- \*\*Member benefits brochure
- \*\*Information services brochure
- \*\*Southern California "Fast Facts" pocket guide

##### **Subregional and member policy briefings**

One of the key elements of the communications strategy will be a comprehensive informational briefing program. Another will be creating opportunities for subregional members to express views and improvements to leadership about SCAG's outreach, operations, communications and other areas of concern to subregional members.

SCAG will develop and implement an outreach effort to engage Regional Council members and help keep their jurisdictions regularly informed on various topics, including SCAG operations, pending state and federal legislation, regional policy and planning issues, and other matters of concern to SCAG.

SCAG will develop a program and schedule in which either the executive director or deputy director accompanied by appropriate staff will conduct regular informational briefings and updates for each subregion.

Regional Council members will augment the speakers bureau program by serving as agency spokespersons at subregional issue briefings and to various community and business organizations.

Briefing sessions will be conducted as part of scheduled COG board or policy committee meetings. For subregions that do not have organized COGs, the SCAG briefing program will consist of briefings with Regional Council members and other local elected officials from the region.

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will strive to schedule and execute at least one issue briefing per subregion each year. It will also arrange (1) opportunities for subregional members to express their views and improvements to leadership about SCAG's outreach, operations, communications and other areas of concern to subregional members; and (2) briefing sessions for boards of supervisors, city councils, and state and regional agencies in the SCAG region.*

#### **Enhanced e-mail communications**

SCAG will place a greater emphasis on e-mail to communicate expeditiously with Regional Council members.

SCAG is using e-mail to:

- Disseminate the monthly "e-Vision" electronic newsletter
- Disseminate the *GovAffairs* legislative newsletter.
- Inform the Executive Committee and Communications Task Force of developments involving urgent regional governance issues.
- Transmit agendas for upcoming meetings of the Communications Task Force.

SCAG also will utilize e-mail communications for such items as:

- Legislative alerts and updates
- Conference "Save the Dates"
- Personnel changes
- Informational updates
- Media clip distribution (limited)

SCAG is also undertaking an effort to enhance e-mail communications for other key audiences. *\*\*Existing internal email distribution lists will be reviewed and expanded over time to include current contact information for:*

- Policy committee members
- Subregional coordinators
- County Transportation Commissions
- Non-Regional Council city council members and county supervisors
- Other elected and stakeholder audiences.

SCAG will employ a tiered approach to e-mail communications. Under this approach, certain communications will be sent to focused audiences such as the Executive Committee, while others would be disseminated to the entire Regional Council.

For legal reasons, SCAG will continue to disseminate certain types of “official” communications by traditional mail.

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will: (1) ensure that Regional Council communications are delivered on time by establishing a protocol for the regular dissemination of certain documents by e-mail; and (2) updating and expanding existing e-mail distribution lists for the Regional Council, policy committees, subregional coordinators and other key stakeholder audiences.*

#### **Regional Council media/presentation training**

SCAG will provide Regional Council members with an opportunity to attend a half-day media workshop. Although similar to the previous sessions, it will provide more in-depth, one-on-one media and message training to equip members with effective media interview techniques. *Members will be provided with pre-drafted presentations and taking points, and they will receive a SCAG media/message booklet that includes the information described above and media “dos and don’ts.”*

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will prepare and execute at least one half-day media and message training sessions each year for members of the Regional Council, and when space is available, elected officials from member cities and counties.*

#### ***\*\*Regional Council Manual***

*A new comprehensive Regional Council handbook will be developed and distributed to all Regional Council members. It will include an assortment of background information about the agency’s mission; MPO responsibilities, agency decision-making process; Regional Council “constituent” communications; committee/task force structure; staff organization, responsibilities and contact information; Regional Council districts; by-laws; member bios; subregions. The handbook will also incorporate some of the information currently included in the “Rookie RCers” Handbook and will replace it.*

#### **Regional Policy Fact Sheets**

Because it is important that members are familiar with issues, SCAG prepared and provided Regional Council members with a series of regional policy fact sheets. Each fact sheet briefly describes major programs and policy issues facing the region, including:

- Regional airport planning
- Meeting regional housing needs

- The relationship between traffic congestion and air quality
- The importance of goods movement
- The Regional Transportation Plan as a blueprint for Southern California's transportation future
- The benefits of a high-speed Maglev transportation system for Southern California
- The objectives and anticipated outcomes of the Growth Visioning For Sustaining A Livable Southern California initiative

The fact sheets will now be updated to reflect current Board policies and will continue to serve as "talking points" for Regional Council members and as brochure inserts or as stand-alone materials for use in various outreach capacities.

**Deliverable goal:** SCAG will update and redistribute a series of at least 10 policy and program fact sheets for the members of the Regional Council.

#### **New Member Orientation**

It is important that new members of the Regional Council have a good understanding of the SCAG organization, operation, initiatives and challenges.

**Deliverable goal:** SCAG will review and revise as appropriate the materials and techniques and procedures it uses to orient new members of the Regional Council.

### **B. Communicating with member jurisdictions and stakeholder organizations**

#### **Communications tools**

In addition to the fact sheets noted above, a series of other materials will be prepared to help SCAG Regional Council members and staff effectively communicate with political, business, community and other stakeholder audiences. On a global level, the "2 Percent Strategy" Growth Vision for the region will serve as the foundation for the outreach effort, with **Destination 2030** and other specific SCAG planning initiatives coming under that umbrella. **Destination 2030** will be presented within the context of individual project elements (Maglev, logistics, aviation, goods movement, housing, growth visioning, etc.) in a manner that will better resonate with diverse elected, community, business media and other stakeholder audiences. All stakeholder communications – releases, presentations, materials, web site enhancements – will be oriented around this approach.

**\*\*Outreach Program:** Via the Communications Task Force, Regional Council members will be encouraged to conduct at least one presentation within their district. Staff will conduct presentations in areas and/or with audiences that supplement RC member efforts.

**Deliverable goal:** At minimum, at least one community and one elected presentation will be scheduled in each subregion. A goal of scheduling and

implementing one presentation in each Regional Council district will be established.

**\*\*Regional policy fact sheets and brochures**

SCAG has already prepared a series of regional policy fact sheets. Because it is important that members are familiar with issues, SCAG will prepare and provide Regional Council members with a series of new brochures to augment the fact sheets with stakeholder audiences. The brochures will briefly describe major programs and policy issues identified in **Destination 2030**, as well as an overview of the plan and its importance to the region. Brochure topics could include.

- **Destination 2030: Developing a Regional Blueprint**
- **Logistics, Goods Movement and the Southern California Economy**
- **The Nexus of Land Use and Transportation Planning**
- **Financing Southern California's Transportation Priorities**

**Deliverable goal:** SCAG will develop a series of program-specific brochures for use in member communications and other outreach opportunities

**\*\*Presentation Development**

A series of presentations will be developed for use in briefings to member jurisdictions as well as other outreach forums. Presentation topics will coincide with fact sheet and brochure development (Aviation, Maglev, Transportation Funding, Logistics, Compass, Housing, etc).

**Deliverable goal:** Develop a series of new presentations for outreach opportunities which coincide with policy fact sheet and brochure development.

**\*\*“e-Vision” Newsletter**

e-Vision will replace the current “hard copy” Vision newsletter and will be disseminated on a monthly basis to provide members initially to Regional Council members and eventually to other key audiences. Regional Council Action Reports will be incorporated into “e-Vision.” Each May, a special “year-end” e-Vision will be developed to highlight the major accomplishments of the previous leadership term

**Deliverable goal:** Develop and distribute a monthly e-mail newsletter to Regional Council members and other stakeholder audiences.

**\*\*Member Benefits Brochure**

A brochure will be developed to detail the various benefits associated with becoming or remaining a member of SCAG. The brochure will be both a communications tool to retain existing members as well as a core recruitment tool for potential new members.

**Deliverable goal:** Develop a brochure that details the various benefits derived from being a dues-paying member of SCAG.



***\*\*Information Services Brochure***

A brochure detailing SCAG's various data, mapping and other information services will be developed and distributed to members and other interested jurisdictions.

**Deliverable goal:** Develop a brochure that provides an overview of the various information services made available by SCAG.

***\*\*Southern California "Fast Facts" Pocket Guide***

A multi-panel, fold-out pocket brochure containing a series of "fast facts" (ie., population, demographics, employment sectors, etc.) about the Southern California will be developed for use by members and stakeholders as a way to provide easy-reference "factoids" about the region.

**Deliverable goal:** Develop a pocket guide that includes "fast facts" about the Southern California region.

***\*\*Web site improvements***

Enhancements to the SCAG Web site will be undertaken to increase the ease of overall navigation, provide greater focus to member benefits, and create Legislative Affairs & Public Information sections.

**Special Events**

A goal of SCAG is to increase stakeholder participation in its conferences and special events. To improve program quality, content and concomitant participation, SCAG activities will include:

- Counsel regarding program development and conceptualization.
- Assistance with logistics and event planning support including materials development and event coordination. A special events manual has been developed to serve as the primary logistics and program development tool for individual events.
- Outreach to local elected officials and relevant stakeholder organizations to maximize attendance and participation.
- Pre-event publicity, on-site media relations services and post-event media outreach.

Events planned during the coming fiscal year include:

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- 2004 Regional Housing Summit – May 2004
- 2004 Regional Economic Forecast Conference – November 2004
- 2004 General Assembly – Spring 2004
- 2004 Regional Council Retreat – Summer 2004
- SCAG/SANDAG Conference (bi-annual)
- SCAG/Kern COG Conference (bi-annual)
- SCAG/Santa Barbara Conference
- Tribal Governments Summit (bi-annual)

**Deliverable goal:** *In addition to the activities noted earlier, SCAG will conceptualize the programs, provide recommendations regarding potential “noteworthy” speakers or panelists, and develop strategies that maximize participant interest for each event.*

#### **Utilizing Regional Venues**

It is important that local leaders, other stakeholder and the news media throughout the region understand and become involved in SCAG's initiatives. Therefore, it is important that SCAG continue to pursue opportunities to “bring SCAG to them” by staging SCAG conferences and meetings in various geographic locations throughout the region.

**Deliverable goal:** SCAG will make all appropriate efforts to identify venues throughout the six-county region for the staging of SCAG's various conferences (budgetary constraints notwithstanding).

#### **Legislative outreach – Refer to Legislative Program**

##### **\*\*Award Entry/Promotion**

SCAG will identify award submission opportunities with organizations like AMPO, NARC, APTA, PRSA, National Assn. Of Government Communicators, and others, and will promote successful entries via materials, the web site, and the news media. Budgetary and staff resources issues will be considered as award opportunities are identified.

#### **C. Communicating with the news media**

The goals of SCAG's media outreach program are:

- Promoting the importance of regional solutions to the planning challenges facing Southern California.
- Increasing the visibility of SCAG's policy experts, resources and initiatives.
- Developing customized messages that emphasize both the regional nature of various policy issues as well as the local impact of such issues.
- Fostering a uniform global SCAG message of regional cooperation and problem solving that would be disseminated to media and opinion leaders.

#### **Traditional communications with the news media**

SCAG uses a number of methods to communicate with the print and electronic news media including news releases, advisories, and news conferences publicizing SCAG's planning initiatives, Regional Council actions, local and regional outreach efforts, legislative priorities and other key SCAG actions. Additional effort is required to communicate with weekly print media with special community focus.

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will work with the Communications Task Force and individual Regional Council members to identify the specific issues, initiatives and activities that should receive the attention of the news media. SCAG will use telephone, e-mail, and*

*faxed messages to increase and enhance positive coverage by the news media of SCAG events and meetings. It will also target weekly papers with special community focus, such as: California Black Publishers Association; West-side Story; Precinct Reporter, LA Watts Times, Compton Bulletin, Tri-County Ventura News, The Eastern Group, Hispanic News, Inland Empire Community News (El Chicano, Rialto Record and Colton Courier) and the Black Voice.*

### **Editorial board meetings**

Meetings with the editorial boards of Southern California newspapers provide an opportunity to relate the importance of regional solutions to Southern California's many planning and policy challenges including Growth Visioning, regional aviation planning, and meeting future housing needs.

SCAG activities related to the editorial board meetings will include: (1) preparing "talking points;" (2) arranging participation of Regional Council members residing in the media markets; and (3) recommending media outlets to target for the editorial board meetings. Examples of editorial related media include:

- *Los Angeles Times* (Main and Orange County Editions)
- *Los Angeles Daily News*
- *Orange County Register*
- *Riverside Press Enterprise*
- *San Bernardino Sun*
- *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*
- *Ventura County Star*
- *Imperial Valley Press*
- *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*
- *South Bay Daily Breeze*
- *La Opinion*
- *Los Angeles Sentinel*
- *Sing Tao News*
- *KNX-AM*

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will schedule, at minimum, six separate editorial board meetings with key print and editorial media organizations that cover the SCAG region. Issues, coverage areas, and the editorial posture of the media outlet will determine the entities with which the meetings will be held.*

### **Spokespersons for the news media**

SCAG Regional Council members must be able to articulate to the news media the transportation, air quality, housing and other regional policy issues facing Southern California. SCAG will provide Regional Council members with a series of key messages regarding the importance of SCAG's ongoing efforts to seek regional solutions to Southern California's policy challenges. It will also prepare message points on issues relating to aviation, surface transportation, growth visioning, and housing. Certain primary spokespersons will be initially identified and used.

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will identify and provide training to a minimum of 10 Regional Council members to serve as effective agency spokespersons.*

### ***"Guide to SCAG" Media Reference Book***

*A variation of the Regional Council Handbook will be developed and distributed to news media and other interested stakeholders as a reference guide to SCAG. The "Guide to SCAG" will include background information on SCAG's mission, board members, decision-making process, and areas of policy expertise.*

### **Interviews and talk show opportunities with the electronic news media**

It is important that SCAG Regional Council members have opportunities to describe agency operations, policies and initiatives with the electronic news media. Therefore, SCAG will engage in an aggressive pursuit of interview and coverage opportunities for SCAG spokespeople with television, and radio outlets throughout the region. Programs to be targeted include:

- "Life and Times" (KCET-TV)
- "Week In Review" (Adelphia Communications)
- "Eye on LA" (KABC-TV)
- "Midday Sunday" (KNBC-TV)
- "Pacesetters" (KTLA-TV)
- "Real Orange" (KOCE-TV)
- "Which Way LA" (KCRW-FM)
- "Airtalk" (KPCC-FM)
- "The Michael Jackson Show" (KRLA-AM)
- "Community Bulletin" (KWRM-AM)
- "Community Forum" (KUOR-FM)
- "Community Spotlight" (KGGL-FM)
- "City Scope" (KOST-FM)
- "LA Speaks Out" (KJLH-FM)

***\*\*Although not an exclusive list, media outreach pitches will be crafted to coincide with RTP programmatic elements and other presentation topics, including:***

- *Transportation Funding/State Budget Crisis – May - August*
- *Release of the Growth Vision - June*
- *RTIP Release/Approval – July - August*
- *RTP Plan Amendment – Late Summer*
- *Air Quality Conformity - Ongoing*
- *Maglev Implementation - Ongoing*
- *Goods Movement Improvement - Ongoing*
- *Regional Airport System Development - Ongoing*
- *Land Use/Transportation Linkage (Policy Dialogues) - Ongoing*
- *Housing Element Reform – (May summit and ongoing)*

***\*\*Government Affairs staff will provide Directors, on a regular basis, with ideas and suggestions regarding potential media angles for upcoming decisions, milestones, and initiatives.***

***Deliverable goal:*** SCAG will aggressively pursue and schedule, at minimum, ten radio and/or television interviews for Regional Council members on various public affairs shows broadcast through the Southern California region. SCAG will also schedule a series of informational briefings with news assignment editors and producers to increase awareness of SCAG and improve coverage opportunities for both public affairs and news broadcasts.

**D. Outreach to Community and Environmental Justice (EJ) Audiences**

One of the best ways to communicate the role of SCAG is through a series of meetings and presentations to business groups, civic organizations, environmental justice groups, minority and ethnic organizations, labor organizations and local government entities. SCAG's Compliance Procedure for Environmental Justice in the Transportation Planning Process generally describes the agency's environmental justice policy, as well as related public outreach and plan analysis.

***Deliverable goal:*** SCAG will assess the general and EJ outreach efforts conducted for Destination 2030, identify new audiences for ongoing outreach purposes and expand the current EJ database. SCAG will develop a schedule and presentation content for a minimum of 12 presentations each year by members and staff leadership to business groups, civic organizations, environmental justice groups, organizations that represent minorities, labor organizations, faith-based organizations, environmental groups, academic groups, and local government entities. SCAG will continue to work toward creation of an Environmental Justice Advisory Group.

**E. Crisis communications**

It is important that SCAG is properly prepared to respond to media and other inquiries during crises. SCAG will provide Regional Council members with counsel, message development and other crisis communications services.

***Deliverable goal:*** SCAG will develop a crisis communications program including: identification of potential crisis communications situations, development of statements for external and internal use, and identifications of primary and secondary spokespersons and processes for transmitting messages. It will also provide training to key staff and council members in crisis communication techniques.

**F. Project and Program Communication Integration**

It is important that the communication and outreach efforts for all SCAG projects and programs are integrated to be cost-effective and to present a consistent SCAG message.

**Deliverable goal:** *SCAG will integrate its outreach efforts through:*

- **\*\*Internal Editorial Board**  
*An internal editorial board will be established to meet on a regular basis for the purpose of developing new ideas for potential media angles, upcoming events and other communications opportunities.*
- *A consistent look and message for all SCAG communications;*
- *A general SCAG Power Point presentation that includes specific project or program information as needed;*
- *Updated public feedback forms, both paper and Web-based;*
- *An Internet interface to encourage public education and feedback on the related SCAG planning efforts;*
- *Shared contact databases;*
- *Environmental Justice (EJ) Advisory Groups to ensure opportunities for participation by community and EJ groups; and*
- *A central log of outreach efforts to document activities and ensure broadest outreach with overlapping efforts.*

Don Rhodes  
Manager of Government and Public Affairs  
Southern California Association of Governments  
(213) 236-1840

Comm Strategy – Rev 6/25/04  
Doc# 89833

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